

Serial No. 10/762,559

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 9, 11, 17, 22-24, 28, and 31 without prejudice or disclaimer and amend the claims as follows:

1-24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a steel for use in a high strength pinion shaft comprising:

providing a steel;

hot rolling the steel at a temperature of 700°C to 850°C under a draft ratio at an area reduction of 10%; and

high frequency hardening the steel,

wherein a hardness of said steel before the high frequency hardening and after hot rolling comprises a range of 24 HRC to 30 HRC, and

wherein the steel is devoid of Cr, Cu, Ni and Al.

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein a pearlite block size of the steel is 100 µm or less as a circle equivalent diameter.

27. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein the steel comprises:

0.45wt% - 0.55wt% C;

0.21wt%-0.45wt% Si

0.50wt% - 1.20wt% Mn; and

0.15wt% - 0.25wt% Mo.

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28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein a ferrite area ratio is 40% or less before high frequency hardening.

30. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein an old austenite crystal grain size in a hardened layer is 8 or more in view of grain size number.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein a surface hardness of said steel after said high frequency hardening comprises 650 HV or more.